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THE ROYAL COMMISSION

AND

THE EUCHARISTIC VESTMENTS.

A LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

BY THE

REV. T. T. CARTER,

RECTOR OF CLEWER, BERKS.

London,

RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE;

HIGH STREET, | TRINITY STREET,
Oxford. | Cambridge.

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A

LETTER,

ſr.

MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,

I VENTURE to address these remarks to you, for I know no living Statesman who feels a keener interest in Church matters than yourself, and none more able or more willing to take the largest, and most equitable view of the momentous crisis, through which the Church of England is now passing.

The question at issue affects the Laity equally as the Clergy, and is one which must eventually be determined by the Representatives of both orders. Your opinion therefore will have no ordinary weight in its decision, and though I have no right to claim your sympathy with my own opinions, whatever can be shown to be truest and most accordant with the mind of the Church, will, I believe, approve itself to your judgment.

An intense anxiety prevails in the minds of many, lest the position of the Church of England should be seriously compromised, if not vitally injured, by the

measures which, as we fear, may be taken under the pressure of the present popular excitement against the (so-called) Ritualists—lest some of the links still remaining to bind us to the past, to the Church of all ages, and all nations, may be broken and lost to us for ever.

What the result of the Royal Commission may be, is the question that weighs upon us. Painful forebodings are entertained, because some who must necessarily take a leading part in the impending discussions—of whom for their office sake, as well as for their high character, I would fain speak with sincerest reverence—have spoken, as if the object of the Commission was simply “to put down” the practices complained of. On the other hand, some speakers in a late debate on Lord Shaftesbury’s Bill took a far more favourable view of the changes which have been introduced, and a Commission implies inquiry, and an inquiry necessarily involves a comprehensive view of the matters at issue. Notwithstanding therefore some ominous signs, we may still hope that the condemnation threatened by the language to which I have alluded, may yet be overruled by maturer consideration.

The Commission covers a wider field than I propose to enter upon. My remarks will be confined to the one question of the Eucharistic Vestments, which, though but one of many points embraced within the scope of the Commission, is yet the most prominent, and the one which gave the immediate occasion for its appointment.

Doctrine, as such, is avowedly to be left untouched by the Commission, though inasmuch as symbols express doctrine, it is necessarily involved in the questions at issue. But it would be most unjust, if the symbolism of the Eucharistic Vestments were identified with Romanism. For, as was truly observed in a late debate, the "Vestments" trace their origin up to the earliest ages of Christianity, and were, for the most part, the adaptation of garments then in ordinary use, afterwards spiritually symbolized; and moreover, as was also then observed, they are, at the present day, common alike to Rome, to Greece, and to Sweden¹. A doctrine of the Eucharist common to these three Communion, cannot be distinctively characteristic of Rome. They can but be said to agree with regard to the Holy Eucharist, in one point,—a view which no English Churchman can possibly gainsay,—viz. that it is a mystery to be distinguished from all other services of the Church, and forming incomparably the highest act of Divine worship.

There can be no doubt, however, that the "Vestments" are significant of one of the great parties into which, unhappily, the Church of England is divided. It is true that only a few of the Clergy have adopted them, but these represent a large number, both of Clergy and Laity, who sympathize with their adoption, or at least with the use of some distinctive garb for the ministration of the Holy Eucharist, as

¹ See Lord Nelson's speech in a debate in the House of Lords, Tuesday, May 14, 1867.

giving greater expression, and a higher dignity, to this great mystery. And the gravity of the present crisis is not, that a mere question of clerical dress has to be decided,—a matter in itself comparatively trifling—but rather that one party in the Church seeks to triumph in the discomfiture of another party which has at least equal claim for consideration. For although, perhaps, the largest section of the Church of England holds an intermediate position, while exhibiting among themselves very different phases or shades of belief, yet there are two—many call them extreme—but, certainly, strongly antagonistic principles, which ever since, if not before, the Reformation, have struggled within the womb of the Church of England, and which, for distinction's sake, I trust, without offence, may be characterized as the ultra-Protestant and the Anglo-Catholic.

At every critical period in the history of religious belief in England, these two parties have come into direct collision. Held together in a kind of armed truce under the strong rule of Elizabeth, and quieted for the time under James I., they rose into open conflict and with terrible consequences under the first Charles; and now again, after the torpor of the last century, a quickened earnestness having stirred the inmost heart of the Church, the same strong elements of strife have been brought out into more than ordinary prominence, under new forms of expression.

The question of the "Vestments" can easily be

shown to be the revival of an old ground of dispute between these two great parties. To repeal, or even to lower in tone, the Rubric which relates to them, would be to give a decided triumph to the ultra-Protestant over the Anglo-Catholic party, and this under circumstances peculiarly hard and aggravating, because the Law, as it now stands, seems generally assumed to be on the side of the Anglo-Catholic party.

The very circumstance of such a repeal being sought, proves this fact. The reason advanced by Lord Shaftesbury as the ground for the necessity of legislation was, that the Courts of Law could not deal with the case, the Rubric being clearly favourable to the Ritualists, and that therefore a fresh statute was needed in order to abrogate the existing law, as the only means of suppressing the use of the Vestments.

The fact asserted, that this controversy is but the revival of an old dispute between these two great parties, may be readily substantiated by an historical survey of what has taken place touching this question since the Reformation. A brief summary will suffice to establish the point.

In the First Prayer Book of Edward VI. issued in 1549, a careful distinction was made between the dress of the minister to be worn at the ordinary daily, and other occasional services, and those reserved for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. At the end of the Book it was thus ordered:—

“In the saying or singing of Matins and Evensong, baptizing and burying, the Minister in parish Churches and Chapels annexed to the same, shall use a surplice,” &c.

But the Rubric before the Communion Office ran as follows :—

“ Upon the day and at the time appointed for the ministration of the Holy Communion, the Priest that shall execute the holy ministry shall put upon him the vesture appointed for that ministration, that is to say, a white Albe plain, with a vestment or Cope; and where there be many Priests or Deacons, there so many shall be ready to help the Priest in the ministration as shall be requisite, and shall have upon them likewise the vestures appointed for their ministry, that is to say, albes with tunicles.”

That these Vestments were every where found at this period, is proved by the “Inventories” of Church goods taken under authority, many of which are still preserved in the Record Office, Fetter Lane. Vestments, and these of different colours, appear in the list as the property of the several Churches².

This latter Rubric disappeared in the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI., A. D. 1552.

The only Rubric as to the dress of the minister in that book, says :—

“ The Minister at the time of the Communion and at all other times in his ministrations, shall use neither Alb, Vestments, nor Cope; but being Bishop or Archbishop, he shall wear a rochet; and being a Priest or Deacon, he shall have and wear a surplice only.”

It is notorious that this Second Prayer Book marks the lowest point of decline reached during the progress of the Reformation, in respect both of doctrine and ritual, and that the influence which brought about the change was due to foreign ultra-Pro-

² See “ Case submitted on behalf of the English Church Union,” pp. 48—58. (Rivingtons.)

testants, especially to Bucer and Peter Martyr, who succeeded for a time in diverting the true course of the English Reformation. Yet the Vestments, whether still legal or not (a point which has been considered to be open to considerable doubt³), certainly appear to have been still retained in some places; for the "Inventories" just referred to were made in pursuance of a Commission issued in the last year of Edward VI., i. e. *after* the publication of the Second Prayer Book.

On Elizabeth's accession to the throne, when the Reformation, interrupted during the reign of Mary, revived, the chief practical question to be decided, was, "Which of the two Prayer Books of Edward VI. should be authorized?" The ground of the decision has lately been explained by no less an authority than the Court of Final Appeal, in the case of "S. Paul's and S. Barnabas'" in 1857. The Judges then gave it as their opinion, that, "on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, a great controversy arose between the more violent and the more moderate Reformers as to the Church Service which should be re-established, whether it should be according to the First, or according to the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI. The Queen was in favour of the first, but she was obliged to give way, and a compromise was made, by which the services were to be in conformity with the Second Prayer Book with certain alterations; but the ornaments of the Church, whether those worn, or

³ See "Case of the English Church Union," p. 59.

those otherwise used by the minister, were to be according to the First Prayer Book.”

The result of this decision was, that the Rubric authorizing the Vestments, which had been suppressed for a very brief period, became again the law of the Church.

The Rubric thus adopted from the Prayer Book of 1559 was worded as follows:—

“And here is to be noted, that the Minister at the time of the Communion, and at all other times in his ministration, shall use such Ornaments in the Church as were in use by authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth, according to the Act of Parliament set in the beginning of this Book.”

In the same year a statute was passed, to the same effect, and in the very same words, a proviso being added, that—

“Such ornaments should be retained until other order shall be thereon taken by the Authority of the Queen’s Majesty, with the advice of her Commissioners appointed and authorized under the Great Seal of England for Causes Ecclesiastical, or of the Metropolitan of this realm⁴.”

No order, however, was ever taken during this reign to change or modify this Rubric. Only in the course of the very same year certain “injunctions” were issued, with “interpretations,” &c., to specify in detail, among other points, “the particulars relating to the Divine Service, &c.” These “interpretations” determined the distinction to be observed between the Eucharistic Vestments and the ordinary garb of the minister, as follows:—

⁴ Stat. 1 Eliz. c. 2. p. 25, 1558-9.

“That there be used only but one apparel, as the Cope in the ministration of the Lord’s Supper, and the surplice in all other ministrations,” &c.⁵

Thus both the Church and State gave their separate sanctions to this distinctive Eucharistic garb; for the Rubric and the Statute were agreed as to this principle, and the “Injunctions” drawn up by the Bishops, and invested with Royal authority, were intended to give it practical effect. It should be borne in mind that the judgment of such men as Archbishop Parker, Cox, Sandys, and Grindal, is thus committed in favour of the principle of these disputed Vestments. But the tide of ultra-Protestantism had set in so violently, and in this particular direction, that only by the strong exercise of authority could even the surplice be maintained in actual use. The difficulty of prevailing on Bishop Hooper, in Edward’s reign, to wear even the ordinary episcopal habit, is well known. This single instance of Puritan prejudice is enough to show the strength of the current of popular feeling, acting in all directions upon the parochial clergy, and shared by at least a large number of them. The question of ministerial dress was, indeed, the special crux of the day, and it was made the common ground of offence on the part of those who separated from the Church⁶. The surplice and the Geneva gown were then, as

⁵ “Interpretation of the third Injunction.” Cardwell’s Documentary Annals, vol. i. p. 205.

⁶ See Cardwell’s note to the Advertisements of 1564. Documentary Annals, vol. i. p. 287.

they have been in our own time, the symbols of the two diverging lines of theology.

This state of feeling needs to be carefully noted in order to understand the course pursued some years later, when the disorders of the time rendered fresh measures necessary, so as to procure some degree of uniformity in the ministrations of the Church⁷. With this view, in 1564, i.e. five years later than the issue of the Prayer Book, certain "Advertisements" were drawn up. The pressure against the use of the Eucharistic Vestments having in this interval continued to gain strength, it had become hopeless to attempt to enforce the use of the cope or chasuble in parish churches, but it was still thought it might be retained in cathedrals and college chapels. The "article" in the "Advertisements" relating to the "ministrations of prayer and Sacraments" was as follows:—

"In the ministration of the Holy Communion in Cathedrall or Collegiate Churches, the principall Minister shall use a Cope with Gospeller and Epistoler agreeably; and at all other prayers to be sayde at that Communion Table to use no cope, but surplices.

"That every minister sayinge any publique prayers, or ministeringe the Sacramentes or other rites of the Church shall weare a comelye surples with sleeves, to be provided at the charge of the Parishe."

Thus the surplice was taken as the minimum to be enforced in parishes, although, where a higher service could be maintained, the ancient Eucharistic garb was still to be used.

⁷ See Blunt's Annotated Prayer Book, Ritual Introduction, p. lxxviii.

It should be noted that the "Advertisements" never received the Royal sanction, and therefore had no legal authority; they were left to be put in force by the Bishops on the ground of canonical obedience. The refusal to sanction these regulations has been generally attributed to Elizabeth's strong feelings in favour of the ancient usages, and her unwillingness to supersede the Rubric on "Ornaments," and its corresponding clause in her Act of Uniformity, by *legalizing* what it was then hoped would be no more than a temporary concession to popular prejudice.

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind, before considering the Canon of 1603, which Lord Shaftesbury's Bill would have made law. During the reign of James I., Puritanism had attained a height of power which compelled the authorities of both Church and State to abandon all attempts to enforce the still existing Rubric, and the only practical question now concerned the use of the surplice. The tone of ritualistic feeling had by this time fallen lower than in the age of Elizabeth, for the "Advertisements" had urged the use of the Eucharistic Vestments in cathedrals and college chapels, but in the Canon there is no mention of them whatever.

The 58th Canon simply ruled thus:—

"Every Minister saying the public Prayers, or ministering the Sacraments or other Rites of the Church, shall wear a decent and comely Surplice with sleeves, to be provided at the charge of the Parish. And if any question arise touching the matter, decency, or comeliness thereof, the same shall be decided by the discretion of the Ordinary."

A further provision is added concerning Hoods.

But notwithstanding this concession to a temper of mind too strong to be overruled, the Church itself never changed her purpose or surrendered her principles. This was very clearly proved at the most critical juncture in her fortunes which has ever occurred since the Reformation, when after the Great Rebellion the Church party, represented by the Bishops and her chief Divines, met the leaders of the Presbyterian party in the Savoy conference, to discuss the form which the Prayer Book should take, when it rose to life again after its temporary proscription.

The last revision took place at this time, A.D. 1662, and the Prayer Book passed under the most searching investigation in the discussions between the contending parties. Special attention was directed to this particular Rubric touching the Eucharistic Vestments. This is certain, for the Presbyterians earnestly desired its repeal. The meaning of the Rubric was clearly understood at that day, for the possible introduction of the special Eucharistic garb, now so much opposed, and at the time generally disused, was the very ground on which the repeal was demanded. The Presbyterians urged: "Forasmuch as the Rubric seemeth to bring back the cope, albe, &c., and other Vestments forbidden by the Common Prayer Book, 5 & 6 Edward VI., and so by our reasons alleged against ceremonies under our eighteenth general exception, we desire that it may be wholly left out." The Bishops in reply refused to accede to their demand. They

answered: "We think it fit that the Rubric continue as it is ⁸."

That in retaining it the Bishops were not actuated by a mere unwillingness to remove a record of the past, now become and intended to remain inoperative, is evident from a remark of Bishop Cosin's, one of the chief revisers in that Conference, for in his "*Particulars to be considered, explained, and corrected in the Book of Common Prayer,*" in referring to this Rubric, he says: "But what these ornaments of the Church and of the Minister were, is not here specified; and they are so unknown to many, that by most they are neglected; wherefore it were requisite that these Ornaments used in the second year of King Edward, should be here particularly named and set forth, that there might be no difference about them ⁹."

In Cosin's mind, therefore, the Rubric was not intended to remain a dead letter. His language implies that the Eucharistic Vestments were even then in use in some places ("by most neglected," he says, implying that some used them); and his own feeling, how far supported by his fellow Commissioners is uncertain, was evidently in favour of promoting their use.

It is clear, then, that if we except the one year and twenty days ¹, during which the Second Prayer Book

⁸ Cardwell, Conferences, p. 314.

⁹ Cosin's Works, vol. v. p. 507.

¹ The Second Book came into use on All Saints' Day, 1552.

of Edward VI. was the authorized standard of the Ritual of the Church of England, there has been a uniform testimony on the part of our Church in favour of the distinctive Eucharistic garb; and that the opposition to it came from an extreme party, which took its rise in the heat of the early days of the Reformation, chiefly through intercourse with the Protestants of Geneva and Zurich. It is, moreover, a significant circumstance, that the same section which objected to this Vestment Rubric desired also that "the surplice, the sign of the cross in baptism, and kneeling in Holy Communion," should be abolished.

Referring to these last points of ceremonial to which objection was raised, the Savoy Commissioners observed: "These are the yoke, which, if removed, there might be peace. It is to be suspected, and there is reason for it from their own words, that somewhat else pinches, and that if these ceremonies were laid aside, and these or any other prayers strictly enjoined, it would be a burden intolerable²."

Thus then from 1559 to 1662 a continuous expression of desire for the preservation of these ancient Catholic Vestments was maintained, the Rubric silently witnessing for their use, while only a lower standard could, in practice, be enforced.

The statute 1 Mary 42, rendered it illegal after the 20th of December, 1553.

² Cardwell's Conf., p. 345.

5 Each time the Prayer Book has been revised—in 1459, 1603, and 1662—this Rubric was under consideration, and each time it received a renewed sanction. Deliberately reintroduced after its suppression in 1552, retained and so renewed, though practically fallen into disuse, in 1603, it was re-asserted, in the face of a strong popular remonstrance, at the last Revision in 1662.

The Savoy Commissioners evidently contemplated the possibility of a return to the ancient use, in fact they expected what has actually occurred in our own day, and yet this anticipation did not deter them from upholding it; nay, so carefully did they consider the matter, that they altered the language of the Rubric, and even strengthened the terms which provided for the use. The italics mark the differences in the two versions here placed side by side:—

PRAYER BOOK OF 1559 AND
1603-4.

“And here it is to be noted, that the Minister at the time of Communion, and at all other times in his ministration, shall use such Ornaments in the Church as were in use by authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth.”

PRAYER BOOK OF 1662.

“And here is to be noted, that *such Ornaments of the Church, and of the Ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained, and be in use*, as were in this Church of England, by the Authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth.”

The change in the wording of the Rubric unquestionably proves careful consideration of its contents, while the insertion of the words, “shall be retained,” mark the fixed purpose of upholding what remained,

and, wherever possible, restoring what had fallen into disuse, of the points of Ceremonial which it covered.

The Conference at the Savoy closed the question for the time, now once more about to be re-opened.

It was urged as a plea for Lord Shaftesbury's Bill, that it would give legal validity to the intentions of the Church as expressed in the Canon, against mere Statute Law which ruled otherwise. No one who has fairly studied the question could possibly thus regard it. The Bill would, on the contrary, over-ride the permanent witness, both of Church and State, as expressed in the Rubric, the more authoritative document, substituting for it, in legalizing the Canon, a rule which the Church adopted merely as a matter of necessity, and which she had deliberately rejected as her absolute and abiding principle, when urged to suppress the Rubric contradicting it.

It is most important, in reference to the present controversy, to keep clearly in mind the principle which has hitherto regulated every revision of the Prayer Book, since the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth. The time of each revision was a crisis of the first magnitude in the history of the Church of England. The first, that of 1559, was the period when, during Parker's primacy, the Reformation, having survived the persecutions of the reign of Queen Mary, was consolidated. The second revision, that of 1604, took place under the first Stuart, when the influence of Scotch Presbyterianism, after-

wards to become so fatal in England, first began to be felt. Lastly, that of 1662 occurred at the time when the Church arose out of the wreck of the Great Rebellion. Each revision was alike marked by one principle, viz. a desire to recover features of the ancient ceremonial, which had been lost during the temporary preponderance of foreign ultra-Protestantism, which—I am not using too strong a term—mutilated our first Prayer Book.

It would be too long a digression to enter into any detailed account of the important gains in point of Catholic ritual, which we owe to those successive Revisions. One or two instances under each head will be sufficient to show the tendency of the principle regulating all alike.

To the first revision we owe the first portion of the form of administering the Elements. We have Archbishop Whitgift's explanation of the change then made, in his answer to an inquiry from Lord Francis Burleigh, as to the points of difference between the Book then sanctioned, and the Second Book of King Edward. "King Edward's Second Book appointeth only these words to be used when the Bread is delivered at the Communion; 'Take, eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thine heart by faith with thanksgiving;'" and then the cup is delivered; 'Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful;' whereas in Her Majesty's Book at the delivery of the bread these words must be said; 'The Body of our Lord

Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take, eat this, &c.’ And at the delivery of the cup, these words; ‘The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this, &c.’³”

In 1604 the preface for abrogating the use of the cross in Baptism was resisted, and the doctrine of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper was first inserted in the Catechism.

In 1662, the manual actions at the time of Consecration, the order to cover the vessels after distribution, and another to consume “reverently” what remained of the consecrated elements, were for the first time introduced; and, in the Litany, the term “Pastors” was changed into “Priests.”

Moreover, in each case of revision the appeal was evidently to the First Prayer Book of Edward VI., the principle uniformly adopted being *not* to originate new forms, but to restore the treasures of ancient Catholic usages left to us in that great work of the Reformation. It would therefore be the initiation of an entirely new line of action in regard to the Prayer Book, a giving way at length to the pressure of ultra-Protestant principles, hitherto resisted,—the effects of which none can foresee,—if now we return to the destructive principles of 1552, thus narrowing the true basis on which the Reformation was intended to be maintained,—a strange work in an age which boasts so

³ Cardwell’s History of Conference, p. 33.

loudly of largeness of sympathy, and comprehensiveness of true liberality; and this more especially when liturgical lore, and primitive usages, have been illustrated with a profusion of learning and accuracy of scholarship, unknown to any former age, through the labours of such men as Sir William Palmer, Dr. Neale, and Archdeacon Freeman.

The strongest argument urged against the Eucharistic Vestments is their actual disuse during so long a period. "Granting them to be lawful and originally intended to be in use amongst us, and even that they have been actually in use for a brief period, and in occasional instances, yet their general discontinuance for a period extending over no less than 300 years, is a sufficient proof that they are alien to the English mind, and though theoretically admissible, yet that practically they have been rejected and condemned."

This argument proceeds on the assumption that the last 300 years have been sufficient to develop the full meaning of our Prayer Book, and left nothing to the future to bring forth out of its treasures. But is this to be at once admitted? More especially have the circumstances and temper of the times which have intervened since the Reformation been favourable to the expression of what may be called the objective or ritualistic side of our Prayer Book? We have seen how Puritanism prevailed up to the end of the seventeenth century to check and hinder, where it failed to overrule and

change, the appointments intended to be carried into effect. And surely the Puritanism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has never been considered to be the true exponent of the mind of the English Church. The torpor which, as a reaction from the terrible conflict which desolated the Church in the seventeenth century, spread over the whole of the eighteenth century, generating various forms of infidelity, constraining the great Divines of the day to devote their learning and energies to the defence of the very substance and outworks of the faith, silencing Convocation, and reducing our Confirmations, our Communion, even our ordinary services, to a level of infrequency and coldness which we still mourn over. Again, the earnest Evangelical movement of the close of the last century, through which the blessed Spirit of God breathed life again into the dead bones of our half-Socinianized frame, was not favourable to what every one now feels to be even a moderate display of ritualism.

These various phases through which our Church has passed, have necessarily produced a habit of thought affecting the present generation, prejudicing the discussions of our own day, prepossessing the mind with a view and type of Church services and Church principles which another generation will probably see to have been one-sided and defective—out of harmony with the true and complete mind of the English Reformation.

Moreover, one marked feature of our history is

the slowness with which the several features of our Church system have come out to view since the great depression of Church principles in 1552. Nearly all that we possess of our present ordinary ceremonial has been gained since that day by a struggle, and often after a long interval of abeyance, which has given to it when re-introduced the character of an innovation.

Take, e. g., the history of the position of our Altars or Holy Tables. During the First Prayer Book they stood as of old against the East wall of our chancels, altar-wise, i. e. with their short ends facing north and south, according to the almost universal custom of the Catholic Church ⁴. The Second Prayer Book changed their position. They were then removed down into the body of the chancel or of the nave, and placed table-wise, i. e. with their short ends facing east and west, thus looking as little like altars as possible. And this was the manifest and avowed intention of the change. Against this state of things a practical protest was raised at the very commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, by the issue of an order that "the Holy Table be kept in its old place against the East wall" during the intervals between celebrations, and only be removed from this place for the actual purpose of Communion, thus witnessing to the truth of its rightful position, even while constrained to make an accommodation with admitted error. This

⁴ The exception is the Basilican arrangement, such as prevails in our Cathedrals, where the altar stands at the intersection of the choir and transepts.

arrangement lasted throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. Not till Laud's time was the permanent restoration of the Holy Table attempted. The struggle to effect this change, what it cost those who bravely strove at the risk of the world's hate, and even of their lives, to accomplish it, is well known.

The Great Rebellion overthrew for the time Laud's good work; and the Restoration found the Holy Tables removed back again into the naves of our churches in numberless instances. Silently, however, the mind of the Church worked, and without any fresh effort, through the truer Church feeling which manifested itself after the Restoration, the Holy Table became fixed universally in its ancient place without further struggle.

It required upwards of one hundred years, however, more than three generations, to restore to us this central practical truth of the Eucharistic system, according to the traditionary rite of the Catholic Church.

The case has been the same even with positive Rubrics, plainly enjoined. Take, e. g., the one which orders the presentation of the Elements at the time of the Offertory. This, which had been in the First Prayer Book, and suppressed in the Second, was restored in the Revision of 1662. It runs thus; "And when there is a Communion the Priest shall place upon the Table so much Bread and Wine as he shall think sufficient." There was also inserted in the body of the Prayer immediately following, the

petition for accepting "our oblations." The two insertions corresponded—"the Bread and Wine" ordered to be placed upon the Altar being the "oblations" referred to in the Church Militant Prayer.

The recovery of this Rubric was one of great importance to the completeness of the Eucharistic mystery, and the primitive order of the Liturgical system. It restored to us what the Greek Church calls "the lesser entrance," the Western, "the first oblation," i. e. the oblation of the unconsecrated elements to be set apart to become the outward signs and forms of the Sacramental Presence—a rite lost in the interval between the abrogation of the First Prayer Book, and the last Revision. This restored rule, however, was not admitted into general practice till our own day. There have been no doubt individual instances of its use, but, generally speaking, the custom in our churches has been to place the Elements on the Holy Table before the commencement of the service. In consequence of this omission, the very meaning of the term "oblations" has been obscured, it being commonly explained to mean the "offerings for the clergy," though the term includes both, as distinguished from "alms," or offerings for the poor: The introduction of the Credence also, i. e. a proper place for the Elements before their presentation on the altar, the use of which the Rubric manifestly involves, has been often regarded with suspicion, and not uncommonly resisted with jealous dislike.

There are still in the Prayer Book unobserved Ru-

brics, waiting a favourable season to bring them into general use. Take, e. g., an important one in the Marriage Office. There are two parts in that Office, the betrothal and wedlock, and the dedication of the wedded pair with special supplication for the blessing of God on their marriage. The service was framed under the idea of distinguishing these two portions by a difference of place in its administration.

The Rubric at the beginning orders that "the persons to be married shall come into the body of the church, with their friends and neighbours, and there standing together, the Man on the right hand, and the Woman on his left, the Priest shall say, &c." The Rubric following the first blessing, and preceding the Psalm cxxvii., says: "Then the Minister or clerks, going to the Lord's Table, shall say or sing this Psalm following." The Rubric following the Psalm says: "The Psalm ended, and the Man and Woman kneeling before the Lord's Table, &c." It is evidently intended that the first part of the service should take place in the body of the church, where all present are to be assembled. Afterwards the Priest, followed by the bridegroom and bride, is directed to go up to the altar, the "friends and neighbours" remaining still in the body of the church. The symbolism of the change of place is striking and instructive. The betrothal and wedlock are public acts, to be done among their friends: the union being now complete, typifying the "mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church," the bride-

groom and bride, leaving their friends, go up to receive their final dedication and blessing in the holiest place in God's immediate presence.

But this usage of the Church, with its significant sacramental teaching, is lost to us, through neglect of the Rubrics, and when introduced is considered an innovation on the supposed authorized system of the Church of England.

Our Prayer Book is, in truth, as a landscape, over which the light traversing reveals successively different portions, the eye but slowly taking in its various points of view. It is with the ceremonial, as with the doctrine of the Church. The several Articles of the Creed, in the progress of the Church's history, have been brought prominently into notice, not altogether as one body of truth, which they really form, but separately and in succession, as circumstances have tended to fix special attention on one or another doctrine. This is more especially true of rites and ceremonies in our case, because changes have, for the most part, been made against much opposition, and were designed to raise the tone and character of our service, so far as the times permitted, to be acted on more fully, when the favourable combination of circumstances arrived. The devout and thoughtful Alexander Knox pointed out this peculiar character of our Prayer Book, in his striking view of the Revision of 1662. His deeply earnest words have a momentous bearing on the questions now before us, for they specially relate to our Communion Office.

“The distress,” he says, “of the English Epis-

copal Church during the Usurpation had more than ever endeared her to her genuine children. A revision therefore of the Liturgy being called for, the Revisers seized the opportunity (contrary to what the public was reckoning upon) of introducing changes not more Puritanical, but more Catholic. They effected this no doubt stealthily, and to appearance by the minutest alterations; but to compare the Communion Service, as it now stands, especially its Rubrics, with the form in which we find it previously to that transaction, will be to discover that without any change of features that could cause alarm, a new spirit was then breathed into our Communion Service, principally by a few significant circumstances in the manner of conducting the business, which were fitted to impress the devout, though certain to be fully understood only by the initiated. Who can doubt of this transaction being in all its bearings providential? And yet it was clearly insufficient to produce any extended or striking effects. It has actually escaped general observation. Wheatley on the Liturgy notices the changes, but though himself a High Churchman, overlooks their import. What then can we suppose but that these changes were meant by Providence to subserve ulterior movements, to lie dormant, as it were, until nearer the time of the end, when it might suit the order of Providence, that what was before deposited as seed should grow up into a rich and luxurious harvest⁵?"

. These words might well be deemed prophetic, so precisely they describe what we have seen come to pass in our day. And if it be, as Knox suggests, that the Hand of God mercifully overruled these changes in our Prayer Book, introducing and preserving what, though not understood at the time, might grow into life in after days, to supply fresh needs, and win fresh sympathies under new combinations of feelings and desires, in the advancing progress of our Church life, what true friend of the Church of England, what reverent mind, watching the signs of the times, would now take part in the desired repression of a ritual, which, though more symbolic and ornate than usual, certainly has succeeded, as nothing else has done, in drawing classes of people who have hitherto been untouched by the Church's ministrations, when it is clearly proved that such rites are lawful, and are but the bringing forth into act what has simply been in abeyance for want of favourable opportunities for their development, and which were intended to be our use, whenever such opportunities should occur?

Suppose that the actual customs of any past period of our Church's practice had been taken as a standard at which our ceremonial system should be fixed. It would have been to pollard the tree, and cause for ever afterwards a most imperfect and irregular growth. It would be the same now, if we were to take the present standard of popular taste, which is but the result of past neglect and imperfect teaching, and stamp it as the absolute

unchangeable type of a Church of England Service. What e. g. would have been our present condition, if the strongly urged demand, so repeatedly made during the reign of the Stuarts, to "put away" "the surplice and square cap, the cross in baptism, the ring in marriage, kneeling at communion," &c., had been yielded to? Yet there surely seems no more reason or principle against some distinctive form of dress for so markedly distinctive a service as that of the Holy Eucharist, than against a special garment for the desk, and the Litany stool.

It is scarcely possible for any one to feel that our Communion Office, as at present ministered in most places, bears a true proportion to our Matins, or Morning Prayer. The sudden change, when the sermon is ended—the organ silent, the choir gone, the comparatively empty church—makes a contrast which certainly exalts the earlier above the later part of the service. Quite independent of special doctrine, the mere fact that the Holy Eucharist is the only service which our Lord Himself instituted, and the Matins only a subsequent addition to prepare the way for, or keep up the devotional life fed by, that great Mystery, were enough to prove that such a contrast in favour of the less to the detriment of the greater, cannot be according to His mind. This present state of feeling cannot last. There is growing widely among us a manifest deepening of devotional feeling in favour of a greater development of the Eucharistic service, as the central, crowning act of worship, and this truer, more intelligent view must spread; and, as

it spreads, there will also grow a truer sense of the reasonableness and suitableness of a more distinctive ceremonial to mark this mystical service, so far above all other portions of the Church's system.

It is not difficult to suggest reasons why this special Rubric concerning the Eucharistic Vestments has waited till our own day to bear fruit. During the first century and a half after the Reformation the state of feeling which could endure the "table-wise" position of the altar in the body of the church, and require a Rubric to explain why kneeling to receive our Lord's Body and Blood is no idolatrous or superstitious custom,—was not one likely to desire or encourage the restoration of garments which involved a high and careful ceremonial. Nor was the last century, which, notwithstanding the present zeal of Church restoration, has left still in some places lamentable marks of its irreverence for all sacramental truth in the state of many of our fonts and altars, one that would seek out "garments for glory and beauty" for the priesthood.

But the circumstances of our own day, both material and doctrinal, have very specially been such as would conduce to this result. We have at last learned to build churches with chancels and altars in due proportion to the rest of the building, and with a correctness of architectural arrangements not found in any churches previously built since the Reformation. A general taste for colour and decoration has also spread in every direction. Our altars are now properly vested and more richly clothed, and, as the Privy Council determined to be the legal and legi-

timate use, in divers colours according to the season. Surpliced choirs have been commonly formed in our parish churches, the Priest only by his stole being now distinguishable from the lay clerks. At the same time a higher appreciation of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist has been, by the great mercy of God, revived among us, and more frequent and more reverent Communions have become a special mark of our day. These deeper and more devout views of this momentous doctrine have grown and spread, as the result of inquiries which late controversies on this special subject have forced on us. What then more natural than that attention should be drawn to the Rubric which speaks of the distinctive garments which in all ages, through all Catholic Christendom, the religious instinct has sought out for the purpose of expressing the special greatness and dignity of this service—something to distinguish the celebrant of our highest act of divine worship from the minister of the ordinary daily prayer, to separate him more markedly from the chorister?

And if the very Rubric exists which, according to very high authority, was intended to sanction, if not enjoin, the use of such Vestments, what more reasonable than to conclude that it was provided on purpose to meet the very case which, at last, has actually occurred, as one advance to a fuller ceremonial reserved for our day? And if so, what a strange idea of faithfulness to the Reformation, immediately to arise and to destroy the long-looked-for and long-desired restoration, just as the occasion for its use

has arrived ! What connexion can there possibly be between the mind of our own day and the mind of all who have previously been engaged in the construction and revision of our Prayer-Book (always excepting the one unhappy year of the Second Book), if a strong and spreading desire, unexpectedly stirred, to introduce what they deliberately enacted, is at once to be extinguished, and their good work ruthlessly overthrown in the very promise of its first Spring ?

The Eucharistic Vestments have awakened opposition in various quarters. The old "No Popery" cry has been aroused. But if my argument is sound, it is no more reasonably applicable in this case than the similar cry of former days against "Prelacy," and the "Babylonish Garment," which condemned our Bishops and our surplices under the same category of Romanism. The clear certainty that the Vestments were upheld, and their use desired, in days when Andrews, Overall, Cosin, Jeremy Taylor, &c., &c., were among the master spirits of English theology, is surely abundant proof that both the doctrines symbolized by these Vestments, as well as the garments themselves, are thoroughly English, and true to the best days of the Reformation period.

That the Eucharistic Vestments do symbolize a special view of the Holy Eucharist, as a sacrifice as well as a sacrament, is freely acknowledged. They are valued only because they express, according to long traditionary usage, the objectivity of the Real Pre-

sence, and the sacramental oblation of the one atoning sacrifice for sin ; but they who uphold them as expressive of these great truths, believe that, in so doing, they are in harmony with those great English divines, and are simply bearing witness in their own day to what has been delivered to them. But the opposition has arisen from other sources also, and, I believe, with greater weight. That important body of staunch friends of the Church of England, commonly known as Anglicans, to whom we owe many of our greatest Church works, the leaders of whom are always foremost in defending the Church in her difficulties—these most excellent persons, or at least a great and influential section of them, have strongly impressed on their minds a fixed type of English ritual, limited by finely-proportioned churches, rich decorations, choral services, surpliced choirs, &c., &c. They would check all advance at this point of development. But surely it may well be asked whether, in our free system, which professes to afford room for a great variety of religious convictions within a certain range of allowed teaching, space is not to be found also for those who desire to bring out into greater prominence truths which they hold dearer than life touching the Holy Eucharist. While rejoicing in the work of those who have helped so largely, in many distinguished cases, with most generous devotion, to develop the less mystical services of the Church, we may surely ask why a type which may be perfectly adequate for the expression of our Church prayers, psalmody, &c.,

is also to be regarded as adequate for the expression of the mysteries of the Real Presence and the Eucharistic Sacrifice ?

There is no question but that there is urgent need to attempt to harmonize a due freedom with proper authority, to breathe order and rule into our distracted state. But surely it would be only to introduce fresh causes of division and strife, to stifle the legitimate expression of such deep convictions, to which I have endeavoured to bear testimony, and force, or at least tempt, those who hold them to seek out irregular ways of representing them. How can it be expected that such convictions are to yield to a pressure, urged on by the *Times* newspaper, and popular agitation, when the whole tradition of the Church is known to support and sanctify them—the witness of the whole Catholic Church, and of all previous revisers of our own Prayer Book being manifestly in their favour ?

Should it come to pass that the Rubric in question is abolished, or, if allowed to remain, be so hampered in its operation that a due freedom of development, when desired by the clergy and people, is taken away, and so Eucharistic truth be fettered in its course, the position of the Anglo-Catholic party will be seriously compromised. It is no answer to say that the Rubric, till within a few years, has been practically abrogated. It is not the same thing for a principle to lie dormant, or to be crushed, when circumstances have brought it into operation. The abrogation or the undue fettering of the Church's freedom on such a point, when the oppo-

sition is avowedly caused by a resistance to the doctrines implicated, cannot but be regarded as an authoritative censure of that doctrine. Should such an unhappy result occur, the Anglo-Catholic party will have received a blow which cannot but affect their position in the Church of England, and lead to anxious searchings of heart in numberless instances, both as to the future of the Church itself, and their own ministrations within her communion. But there have been times of greater alarm in the past, out of which God has delivered the Church of England, and even caused the very danger to be the occasion of some unexpected development of her true life. And never was there a time marked by such signs of energy, and devotion, and growing hope, as the present. Nor have we ever had truer friends, or defenders more capable of exhibiting her truth in soberness and meekness of wisdom, as well as in earnest, active service.

We cannot, therefore, I trust, but hope for the best, while yet continued prayer to Almighty God, and, under Him, faithful and honest assertion of the Church's true claims, are deeply needed, lest we suffer a loss which no future age may ever hope to recover.

I beg to remain,

My dear Mr. Gladstone,

With sincerest respect, very truly yours,

T. T. CARTER.







